

Global May Paris

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Project Category: Education Abroad
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Major: Integrated Language Arts Education

Description:

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Location: Paris, France

I also have been interested in French culture as long as I can remember and had always dreamed of one day visiting Paris to see so many of the locations from my favorite movies in person, witness places of great historical importance and experience the exquisite culinary scene. This program gave me the opportunity to fulfill a life-long dream of visiting Paris while also helping me form a culturally responsive pedagogy. I can now apply the experience of feeling lost, afraid and unintelligent because no one could understand me to a classroom scenario now that I understand what ESL students are experiencing.



What was transformational about this project?

I found myself incredibly humbled after the Global May Paris program had ended. For two weeks I interacted with so many people that either spoke no English or only spoke a little seeing that it was their second language. I challenged myself to welcome the discomfort that accompanied the language barrier because I realized that this feeling of discomfort isn't temporary for ESL students in the United States, they're not only in school for two weeks like I was during this program. I noticed how I felt when Parisians would be patient with me and try to understand my feeble attempts at speaking French. Rather than shout "speak French, you're in France!" or anything rude, as Americans so often do to immigrants and visitors to our country, the Parisians treated me and my peers with kindness and respect. As a teacher, I will have students who do not speak English as their first language in my classroom, and my experiences from the Global May Paris program have shown me how far exhibiting patience and kindness goes while interacting with someone who does not speak the same language as I do. Because of this program I will be sure to consider English as a Second Language students as I create my lessons and try my hardest to make my classroom a welcoming and inclusive environment.

This education abroad program consisted of spending fourteen days in the city of Paris, France while completing the class French 1803.3. Throughout the course, we visited well known landmarks and places of historical significance. While visiting these fascinating places, including but not limited to the Louvre and the Palais Garnier, our program leaders provided either lecture style education or had booked a tour guide to convey information and answer any questions. In addition, we also had two free days during the program in which we were free to explore Paris without any academic restrictions as long as we presented what we had encountered and learned during our classroom style lecture the following day which was held in our hotel by our faculty leaders.

Motivation:

Prior to partaking in this program, I had never visited a country in which I was a language minority as an English-only speaker. Fueled by this lack of experience, I decided that if I truly wanted to form a culturally responsive pedagogy, experiencing being the language minority would be an invaluable resource. I hoped that struggling to communicate would help me better understand what English as a Second Language students face everyday here in American classrooms. I looked forward to experiencing this discomfort because in America I am privileged to speak English as my first and only language, able to communicate with others easily.



Highlights of the Trip:

- I visited Les Catacombes de Paris on one of my free days and it was very surreal to experience being surrounded by millions of bones from people who lived and died long before I existed. This visit really put into perspective how far the human species has come in such a short amount of time.
- Eating at restaurants in Paris was a very rewarding experience. I struggled to order food, fearing the minimal amount of French I knew would be laughable, I heavily relied on pointing at the menu. This feeling of helplessness made me truly appreciate the patience of Parisians as they helped me, appreciative of the fact I was at least attempting to refrain from speaking English to them. I also enjoyed the "laid-back" nature of French culture, almost everyone I observed would stay off of their phone and engage in conversation with their dinner partners, and remained seated just chatting and eating for at least an hour, often longer.
- We visited the Palace of Versailles one day during the program which turned out to be my favorite day on the trip. Versailles' beauty blew me away, everything from the Gardens to the architecture of the palace itself was breath taking. I also have always possessed a deep appreciation for history and was thrilled to be at a place such as Versailles where so much history has unfolded.



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